



Girls Matter

Girls Issues Go To Capitol Hill

On Tuesday, October 20, 2009, the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security held a hearing on girls in the juvenile justice system. Prior to the witnesses' testimonies, Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers (D-MI) expressed his disappointment toward members of the House Committee on Education and Labor for not acting yet on the Reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA).

In July 2009, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report on its review of OJJDP's Girls Study Group. Eileen R. Larence, Director of Homeland Security and Justice Issues for the GAO, testified that "The study group found that few girls' delinquency programs had been studied and that the available studies lacked conclusive evidence of effective programs." Larence continued, "however, OJJDP could better address its

girls' delinquency goals by more fully developing plans for supporting such evaluations."

Dr. Lawanda Ravoira, Director of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency for Girls and Young Women, provided statistics on the prevalence of incarcerated girls with histories of abuse and trauma. Committee members were clearly troubled by Ravoira's report of girls who are victimized while incarcerated, or emotionally victimized when forced into physical restraints, or asked to disrobe in front of male guards. Ravoira called for "equitable treatment of girls — for a fair and balanced juvenile justice system that holds girls accountable for their behaviors balanced with a commitment to addressing the critical needs that drive girls into the system."



There is much work to be done when JJDPA is reauthorized. The hearing highlighted the need for stronger language regarding the safety and well-being of girls involved in the juvenile justice system. The House Education and Labor Committee, chaired by Representative George Miller (D-CA), has jurisdiction over the reauthorization of JJDPA. Miller has expressed his intention to finish reauthorization in this Congress.

For more information on the reauthorization of JJDPA see page 3 of this newsletter.



The Legal Rights of LGBT Youth

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) young people in the juvenile justice system, like all people in state custody, have clearly established civil rights under the U.S. Constitution, state and federal statutes and regulations, and agency policy. By examining how these



rights apply to LGBT youth, juvenile justice professionals can gain a greater understanding of how to develop fair and appropriate policies and procedures for working with LGBT youth, in order to protect their civil rights and provide for their safety and rehabilitation.

• LGBT youth in juvenile justice placements have a right to be safe from emotional, physical, and

sexual abuse.

• LGBT youth have a right not to be isolated from other youth in the facility.

• LGBT youth who are not adjudicated "sex offenders" have a right to be free from a "sex Offender" label or classification.



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Special points of interest:

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- *Girls and their body image, page 2*
- *How can girls learn to be at peace with themselves? Tips on page 3*
- *Reauthorization of the JJDP Act is approaching. Read about it on page 3*

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The Art of Yoga Project



Founded by nurse practitioner and yoga instructor Mary Lynn Fitton, The Art of Yoga Project began in 2002 as a pilot program and became an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 2005, with sites in California and Oregon.

In Fitton's clinical practice, she treated many adolescent girls with anxiety, depression, eating disorders and unhealthy habits, such as drug abuse, self-mutilation, and unsafe sex. Determined to find solutions, Fitton created The Art of Yoga Project to help at-risk girls prepare for a positive future. The focus of the Project is on early intervention with girls in most need — those in the juvenile justice system.

The Art of Yoga Project's Yoga and Creative Arts Curriculum for at-risk teen women offers a multi-dimensional approach to build the self-awareness, self-esteem and self-respect necessary for young



women to make healthy lifestyle choices. When offered to teenaged girls referred from the juvenile justice system, goals are geared to producing pro-social behavior, empathy, positive relationship, self-control and accountability to self, others and community.

The Art of Yoga Project is designed to help girls in the juvenile justice system by focusing on early intervention and preparing girls for a positive future. The long-term vision of The Art of Yoga Project's Yoga and Creative Arts Curriculum is to be nationally and internationally recognized as a valid and effective treatment for at-risk adolescent girls, particularly girls in the juvenile justice system. The Project aspires to become leaders in revolutionizing the rehabilitation of girls and continue partnerships with innovative programs such as the Margaret J. Kemp Camp for Girls in San Mateo, California in offering trauma-informed, strength-based, gender-responsive

services.

For more information check out their Web site at www.theartofyogaproject.org

I love my life.

I love being me.

I love my smile.

I love that I am different.

I love the way I think.

~ J.T. - The Art of Yoga
Project participant

Body Image and the Obesity “Epidemic”

Certainly, anyone who has ever met an adolescent girl understand the gravity of body image challenges she faces. We are often in a position to assist young women in discerning the fallacies and shortcomings of advertising that uses women's bodies to sell everything from clothing to motor oil. But, what happens when the young women we work with are overweight or obese? Do we put body image on the back burner in favor of other, more pressing demands? Do we impress upon them the importance of physical health?

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more painful to a
teenage girl than
calling her fat.

When the common characteristics and experiences of young women in the juvenile justice system are taken into account, this issue takes on an even higher level of importance. For example, because young women in the juvenile justice system experience a high rate of physical and sexual abuse, their relationship with their body is already strained. They may use food as a coping tool more than the average teenager and due to heightened levels of self-loathing, they may not want to be healthy. This can put them at higher risk for weight and other health-related challenges.

Obese teens are more likely to be depressed as well. Lack of exercise diminishes production of helpful hormones like endorphins that elevate mood, and high sugar, high calorie foods cause short term spikes in mood that inevitably have a crash at the end. Beyond the physical, there is also the fact that obese teens are picked on mercilessly. The “fat kids” of the world seem to be one of the few groups it is still acceptable to make fun of without remorse. Is it any wonder obese girls are more likely to get depressed? There are few insults more painful to a teenage girl than calling her fat.

Young women who are obese may face serious health problems in the future if they haven't

already. Learning to take care of themselves physically is an important task for young women. It is also crucial that they learn to be gentle with themselves in this process. Health cannot be measured solely by a number on a bathroom scale.

It is important that the physical as well as mental, emotional and social needs of girls be taken care of with compassion. This is particularly true in residential programs that control what girls eat and when they can exercise. Recreation time can and should be more than the bare minimum required to meet licensing standards, and fresh produce and lean meats should not be items sacrificed to save money in the budget.

It is a delicate balancing act for professionals to address physical health without pushing the sensitive body image button of teenage girls, but there is value in walking that tightrope. A strong, healthy body capable of physical activity can be a real boost to a young women's self-confidence.

— Girl Connection, June 2007





A Girl's Peace of Mind

Continued from Girls Matter Summer 09 Issue

How can girls be at peace with themselves when they clearly get the message that girls and women are inherently less important than men?

Here are some things you can do:

- Know that what you model to girls has enormous consequences. If you only talk about women and girls being devalued and never do anything to challenge it, they will learn to be passive. Adults must take action.
- Use existing resources. For example, Title IX, which requires any school receiving federal

money to maintain academic and athletic gender equality.

- When you are asked "what about the boys?" remember that valuing people is not a zero sum game. Respect is not finite with only so much to go around. Valuing girls more doesn't mean you have to value boys less.

- Get comfortable with girls' emotional responses. Adults must understand that young girls don't always have the skills to express their anger in a way that is palatable to adults. This doesn't make their anger or other feelings any less valid.



Peace for girls has often been more about the adults around girls having peace and quiet. It's been about adults having "peace" from the discomfort of dealing with an angry or depressed girl. It has also been about adults having "peace" from confronting the injustices they see and the guilt they feel about doing little to change them.

Girls having peace in their lives isn't about keeping girls passive and quiet. It's about taking action ourselves and empowering girls to fight with courage and honor for what they deserve.



JJDPA Reauthorization

On December 17, 2009, the Senate Judiciary Committee reported bipartisan legislation to reauthorize expiring programs implemented to protect America's youth. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act (JJDPRA) was introduced in March by Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt) and senior Committee members Herb Kohl (D-Wis), Richard Durbin (D-Ill), and Arlen Specter (D-Pa).



The JJDPRA is the result of more than a year of work among Senate leaders and advocacy groups. The provisions in the legislation will help state and local governments reduce crime and curb recidivism rates among juveniles by authorizing federal funding of prevention, intervention and treatment programs for youths. The bill aims to balance federal support for state programs while respecting the individual criminal justice policies of states.

The JJDPRA authorizes federal grants for mental health and drug treatment programs focusing on youth offenders, as well as funding for competitive grants

administered through the Department of Justice. The legislation also encourages states to address the overrepresentation of minorities in the juvenile justice system and supports state efforts to comply with core requirements of the JJDPRA. Funds available through improvement grants will allow states to address the pretrial detention of juveniles in adult jails and the detention of children who commit status offenses like truancy.



— U.S. Senate News Release

The Legal Rights of LGBT Youth continued

- LGBT youth in juvenile justice facilities have a right to receive appropriate medical and mental health care.
- LGBT youth have a right to be treated equally and without discrimination.
- LGBT youth have a right to express their sexual orientation and gender identity.
- LGBT youth in juvenile justice placements have a right not to participate in religious activities that condemn LGBT people.

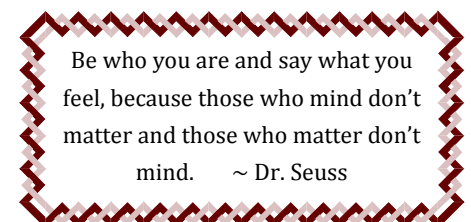


Professionals who work for juvenile justice agencies have a tremendous responsibility to protect the safety and well-being of all youth in their care, including those who are LGBT. Accordingly, these agencies and facilities should educate themselves on the needs of LGBT youth and the scope of their civil rights. They also should enact non-discrimination policies, train juvenile justice staff on how to work with LGBT youth, and establish practices that deal effectively with anti-LGBT abuse.

— The Legal Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth in the Juvenile Justice

System.

For more information visit the National Center for Lesbian Rights at www.nclrights.org.



Girls Inc. Girls' Bill of Rights

Girls have the right to be themselves and to resist gender stereotypes.

Girls have the right to express themselves with originality and enthusiasm.

Girls have the right to take risks, to strive freely, and to take pride in success.

Girls have the right to accept and appreciate their bodies.

Girls have the right to have confidence in themselves and to be safe in the world.

Girls have the right to prepare for interesting work and economic independence.



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Female Stakeholders Group

Trainings and Conferences

17th Annual Idaho State Pre- vention Conference

Sun Valley Conference Center
April 15-16, 2010

Whispers & Screams

May 27-28, 2010
The Hotel at Gateway Center
Ames, Iowa

4th Annual Conference on Girl Bullying & Other Forms Of Relational Aggression

June 25-27, 2010
San Antonio, TX

2010 Adolescent Conference

February 22-24, 2010
Lake Buena Vista, FL

Girls Matter Workshop

February 24, 2010
Presented by Dr. Lawanda Ravoira

